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STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

UNITED STATES – CUBA RELATIONS: DOES THE WAR ON TERRORISM CHANGE OUR STANCE?

BY

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United States - Cuba Relations: Does the War on Terrorism Change Our Stance?

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ABSTRACT

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United States - Cuba Relations: Does the War on Terrorism Change Our

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The relationship between the US and Cuba has been marked by tension and confrontation over the past 40 years. With the exception of Kennedy, every President since Eisenhower has either maintained or strengthened the US policy of economic sanctions against Cuba. The current US policy may actually serve to promote the interests of the Castro regime better than the interests of the US. This Strategic Research Project will review the historical perspectives of our policies toward Cuba and analyze whether this posture should be maintained, revised or repealed all together in light of our "war" on terrorism subsequent to September 11, 2001.

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DEVELOPMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP

EARLY OVERTURES TOWARDS RELATIONS AND U.S. INFLUENCE

In Cuba after the Revolution, people who hated the state saw a new form of state and identified with it. Everybody was able to say, like Louis XIV, "I am the state."

-Fidel Castro

The relationship between the United States and Cuba for the last 40 years has been marked by tension and confrontations. The United States recognized the new Cuban government, headed by Fidel Castro, on January 7, 1959. However, bilateral relations deteriorated rapidly as the regime expropriated U.S. properties and moved towards adoption of a one-party Marxist-Leninist system. As a result, the United States established an embargo on Cuba in October 1960 and broke diplomatic relations the following January. Tensions between the two governments peaked during the April 1961 "Bay of Pigs" invasion and the October 1962 missile crisis.

Cuba established close ties with the Soviet Union and served as a Soviet surrogate in Africa and several countries in Latin America, which fueled cold war tensions and kept the bilateral relationship distant during the 1960s. In the 1970s, during the Nixon administration, the United States and Cuba began to explore normalizing relations, but the talks were suspended in 1975 when Cuba launched a large-scale intervention in Angola. The United States and Cuba did establish interests sections in their respective capitals in September 1977 to facilitate consular relations and provide a venue for dialogue, and both currently operate under the protection of the Embassy of Switzerland. Cuban international entanglements in the 1970s, such as deploying troops to Ethiopia and allowing Soviet forces on the island, continued to strain bilateral relations.

In the 1980s the focus of friction in U.S.-Cuban relations shifted to include immigration, as well as Cuba's international engagements, when a migration crisis unfolded. In April 1980 an estimated ten thousand Cubans stormed the Peruvian embassy in Havana seeking political asylum. Eventually, the Cuban government allowed 125,000 Cubans to illegally depart for the United States from the port of Mariel, an incident known as the "Mariel boatlift." A number of criminals and mentally ill persons were involuntarily included. Quiet efforts to explore the prospects for improving relations were initiated in 1981-82 under the Reagan administration, but

ceased as Cuba continued to intervene in Latin America. In 1983, the United States and regional allies forced the withdrawal of the Cuban presence in Grenada.

In 1984, the United States and Cuba negotiated an agreement to resume normal immigration, interrupted in the wake of the 1980 Mariel boatlift, and to return to Cuba those persons who had arrived during the boatlift who were "excludable" under U.S. law. Cuba suspended this agreement in May 1985 following the U.S. initiation of Radio Marti broadcasts to the island, but it was reinstated in November 1987. In March 1990, TV Marti transmissions began to Cuba.

The 1990s witnessed another migration crisis that set back U.S.-Cuban relations. When demonstrations fueled by food shortages and prolonged unannounced blackouts erupted in Havana in August 1994, the Cuban Government responded by allowing some 30,000 Cubans to set sail for the United States, many in unsafe boats and rafts, which resulted in a number of deaths at sea. The two countries in September 1994 and May 1995 signed migration accords with the goal of cooperating to ensure safe, legal, and orderly migration.

On February 24, 1996, the Cuban military shot down two U.S. registered civil aircraft in international airspace, killing three U.S. citizens and one U.S. resident further worsening relations. The unlawful and unwarranted attack on two unarmed U.S. civilian aircraft resulted in the deaths of Armando Alejandre Jr., Carlos Alberto Costa, Mario M. de la Peña, and Pablo Morales. Immediately after this brutal act, and in response to this violation of international civil aviation law, Congress and President Clinton passed the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, also known as the Libertad Act. The legislation, among other provisions, codified the U.S. trade embargo into law and imposed additional sanctions on the Cuban regime.

PRESENT POLICY

The fundamental goal of United States policy toward Cuba is to promote a peaceful transition to a stable, democratic form of government, preventing mass exodus while encouraging political and economic reforms. The U.S. policy has two fundamental components: maintaining pressure on the Cuban Government for change through the embargo and the Libertad Act while providing humanitarian assistance to the Cuban people, and working to aid the development of civil society in the country.

Support for the Cuban people is the central theme of U.S. policy. New measures will increase this support without strengthening the government. These measures (broadening remittances, expanding people-to-people contacts, increasing direct flights, authorizing food

sales to independent entities, and establishing direct mail service) respond to Pope John Paul II's call to open up to Cuba.²

U.S. policy also pursues a multilateral effort to press for democratic change by urging U.S. friends and allies to actively promote a democratic transition and respect for human rights. The U.S Government opposes consideration of Cuba's return to the OAS or inclusion in the Summit of the America's process until there is a democratic Cuban government. The U.S. has repeatedly made clear, however, that it is prepared to respond reciprocally if the Cuban government initiates fundamental, systematic democratic change and respect for human rights.

In another area of concern, the U.S. Government monitors the possible use by narcotic traffickers of Cuban airspace and territorial waters for the transshipment of drugs from South America to the United States. Additionally, Cuba continues to provide safe haven to fugitives from the U.S. justice system.

CAUSE OF THE MAJOR CHANGE

With the Castro regime securely in power and moving toward Communism as its political ideology, the United States began its predicable shift away from "normal" relations with Cuba. Initially, United States-Cuban relations ranged on the scale from mutual uncertainty to a complete breakdown that resulted in military action on the part of the United States.³

The U.S. exploited the economic vulnerability of Cuba's reliance on sugar sales as its primary means of national wealth as a potential means of promoting change. On 5 July 1960 the United States canceled Cuba's quota for sugar exports to the United States. Castro's answer to this was to take over and nationalize all United States assets in Cuba that included two petroleum refineries, TEXACO and Standard Oil, and several banking institutions. President Eisenhower cemented the shift in relations by establishing a trade embargo between the two countries.⁴ The United States was only one of several countries that lost its interests there to the Castro regime. Unlike Canada however, the United States numbered among the many that were not compensated for the losses.⁵ Shortly after Kennedy was inaugurated came the 17 April 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. The next incident of importance, and one which nearly brought the U.S. to war against the Soviet Union in 1962, was the introduction of Soviet nuclear ICBM's to the island nation just 90 miles south of the Florida coast. There were other smaller tensions and incidents during and after that period but these seem to be the primary activities that galvanized the split between the United States and Cuba. What should be noted is that with the exception of the loss of American assets in 1960, Cuba generally ended up on the dirty end of

the stick. This is evidenced by such manifestations as a continued trade embargo with her nearest wealthy, and former, trading partner the United States to being ousted from the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1962.⁶

With one exception, every president has opted to maintain the policy of embargo against Cuba for a variety of political reasons. The one, and very surprising, exception was President Kennedy. A series of four memorandums between March and May 1963 were declassified in 1999. These memos indicate that the Kennedy administration was looking for a means of "accommodation" with Castro. The one area for negotiation that President Kennedy insisted could not be negotiated if relations were to be normalized was "Cuba's interference in the hemisphere" referring to support of revolutionary factions in other Latin American countries. Subsequent to the missile crisis, Kennedy clearly saw the importance of normalized relations between the United Sates and Cuba as it related to security in the Western Hemisphere. Castro surely saw it as a means of economically boosting his education reform programs as well as other areas that were suffering due to lack of international trade and reduced GNP. The importance that Kennedy put on the issue is punctuated by the fact that he could do nothing regarding Cuba's Sino-Soviet ties as point for negotiation, resulting from the political agreements the U.S. made with the Soviets to end the missile crisis, in an effort to attain hemispheric security.

Even after President Kennedy's assassination, Castro and the Cuban government continued with overtures that could have led to normalization between the two countries. He went so far as to send a back channel message to President Johnson specifying his desire of Johnson's election in 1964 and that he would do what he could to add to Johnson's majority. Castro added that if Johnson needed to make bellicose remarks about Cuba or take some kind of hostile action toward Cuba, all Johnson needed to do is let Castro know that such action was required because of domestic political considerations and he would understand and not take retaliatory action. This opportunity was finally lost when Johnson failed to acknowledge he had even received the verbal communiqué.

Castro made another attempt to contact the Johnson administration by sending his Minister of Industry, Ernesto Guevara, to the United Nations. This contact had been arranged through Castro's unofficial middleman to the United States, news reporter Lisa Howard. Howard established a meeting with Senator Eugene McCarthy and Guevara at which Guevara announced Cuba's desire to establish political relations with the United States. The Under Secretary of State George Ball disapproved of this secret meeting. He emphasized the danger to relations between the United States and other Latin American countries because they had

suspicions the US might make a deal with Cuba without their knowledge.¹⁰ This would be the last attempt by either side for a change in the foreign relations posture between the United States and Cuba. All future presidents and congresses, with the exception of exploratory efforts, would uphold the policies that prevent normalized international interaction between the two nations.

U.S. POLICY AFFECTING RELATIONS WITH CUBA

NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

In looking at the political leadership in the current and past three administrations, one finds vacillation, to a certain degree, on the issue of United States-Cuban relations. Both Presidents Reagan and George H. Bush supported pressuring the Cuban government to make changes towards democratization. In Reagan's administration the policy dealt with concerns over Soviet expansion. This policy was to be effective not only in Cuba but the remainder of Latin America as well. In his 1987 National Security Strategy he gave no specific directions but talked to the aggressive Marxist regime in Cuba as an area of strategic opportunity for the Soviet Union. The next year, Reagan stated the United States is committed to the regional objectives of democracy, freedom and economic progress in Cuba. The only directive given is to counter Soviet expansionist policies in Cuba. Nothing the U.S. was doing at the time, except maintaining a posture put into effect in 1961, was truly working to a national or regional end. Certainly up to this point the Soviet Union had fully bolstered the Castro regime and the 27-year-old trade embargo had little effect on the politics in Cuba. Rhetorically speaking, one is begged to ask the question, why has the United States and it's elected officials been so insistent on standing by old policies?

At the time of the inauguration of President George H. Bush the world was seeing drastic philosophical changes in world power. The Soviet Union had taken major steps towards building rapport with the international system, which was seen as a move towards democracy. Recognizing no changes in Cuba, President Bush's 1990 National Security Strategy spoke very plainly about the changes that Castro needed to make in Cuba in order to realize some type of normal relations with the United States. Bush stated that improved relations with Cuba were dependent on political liberalization and an end to subversion of other governments and undermining the peace process in the region. 14

The Soviet Union dissolved in December 1991, leaving Cuba without it's vital economic support system. Castro ushered in what he termed the "Special Period". What this essentially

meant is that Cuba's working class would need to tighten their belts. Loss of the Soviet funding was followed in 1996 by the enactment of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act; also known as the Helms-Burton Act, which tightened the trade embargo on Cuba. It also codified or put into law all previous presidential orders regarding the embargo. The Libertad Act, combined with the downfall of the Soviet Union, had a devastating effect on the Cuban people and economy, which will be examined later. Though the Helms-Burton Act was signed into law under the Clinton administration, on four occasions by 1998 he had waived full enforcement of it. While the Helms-Burton Act supported the Clinton administration's verbiage in his December 2000 National Security Strategy that states, the United States is committed to promoting peaceful transition to Democracy in Cuba while maintaining pressure on the regime to make political and economic change, it does not support the intent.

TERRORISM RE-KINDLES STRENGTHENING THE SANCTIONS

On 11 September 2001, Islamic radicals flew two American passenger aircraft into the World Trade Center in New York city, one into the Pentagon in Washington D.C. and crashed one in a field in central Pennsylvania. Terrorism had struck a devastating blow on American soil. The administration of President George W. Bush was just nine months old and no National Security Strategy had been rendered. The effect this would have on Cuban American relations became apparent within days. Though the terrorist organization known as Al Qaeda had no direct ties to Castro or Cuba, they were tied together in Executive Order 13224 effective 24 September 2001. This executive order specifically named Al Qaeda and several other terrorist groups along with Cuba and about 5 other countries as having conducted or promoted terrorist activities. Over the years the Castro regime had provided in Cuba, safe haven for members of terrorist groups and other criminals who were on the run. President Bush cited Cuba as one of several nations with whom terrorists had collaborated and from whom they had received sanctuary from prosecution.¹⁷

The current policies toward terrorism, as promoted by the Bush administration, seem to be developed as a response rather than a thought out plan of pre-emptive measures. However, in May of 2001 U.S. policy regarding how the U.S. government will relate to Cuba was clearly stated by President Bush. The policy is more than the isolation of Castro, it includes active support to those working toward bringing about democratic change in Cuba. The Bush administration will support legislation like the Cuban Solidarity Act and the Cuban Internal Opposition Assistance Act. ¹⁸

EFFECTS OF RELATIONS PRE- 11 SEPTEMBER 2001

Effects on the Cuban people and Economy

The revolution is going to solve in twenty-five years the problems it would have taken us a hundred years to solve without success under a capitalist system. Private property engenders egotism, the absence of private property makes miracles.

-Fidel Castro

With Castro's rise to power, two essential objectives also arose. The first was maintaining power in Cuba while effecting a social transformation, regardless of cost. The second objective was to spread the revolution throughout the Caribbean and Latin America and into Africa. 19

These two objectives, coupled with Castro's ideology of how the world, or at least Latin America, should operate were costly to Cuba. They cost her money and the lives of her young men who were sent to Africa and various countries in Latin America to fight for Castro's causes. It is not surprising then, that a relationship of mutual convenience and support developed between Cuba and the Soviet Union. Each provided the other with some basic economic needs as well as providing the ability to keep the United States off balance. In fact, one of the intents of Cuba's leadership was to confront the United States at every possible international venue. This intent led naturally to Cuba's invitation to the Soviet Union to establish a presence in Cuba and that meant in the Western Hemispheric neighborhood of the United States.

Despite promises made by the Cuban revolutionaries to the Cuban people at the time they took power to end monoculture, primary economic reliance on sugar, and foreign dominance of the Cuban economy, things have not changed for the better. In 1984 for example, Cuba was more dependent on sugar production and sales than previously. In 1983, more than 80 percent of Cuba's trade was with other communist countries and only 10 per cent with Western countries. This resulted in the following downward trend; in 1952 Cuba was ranked third of twenty Latin American countries in GNP, but by 1981 it was ranked fifteenth.²¹

The period between 1952 and 1981 was considered one of prosperity for a communist-socialist society. So prosperous in fact that it was noted in a report prepared for the Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress. The report, based on observations of the Cuban society, touted the economic progress made by Cuba through the redistribution of income. The report further stated that the system had nearly eliminated malnutrition in children, paid for national healthcare and had built educational programs that were highly developed.

The report also cited that the population had developed a strong sense of discipline and national pride.²²

It is true that during the last part of the Batista regime, when large sums of United States trade dollars and income from Europe infused the Cuban economy, life was good and the economy flourished. Even after Castro came to power there was still enough of the "old money" in the system to keep the economy afloat for a while. These funds allowed the new regime to continue to build certain parts of the infrastructure in areas where the populace could see the changes and appreciate them. The truth of the matter is, that Cuba and the Castro regime were financially secure until 1961 when the acts of nationalizing foreign assets in Cuba began and the economy began to suffer.

The suffering was limited however; Cuba had been receiving credit from the Soviets since 1959, to include U.S. \$100 million for the purchase of industrial equipment and the 1959 agreement to purchase 170,000 tons of sugar over a ten-month period.²³ When the Soviet Union entered Cuba in 1962, the Cuban economy was heavily bolstered once again by foreign monetary infusions. This time however, the infusion was primarily from one source.

In 1990 the Soviet Union was on its terminal path to dissolving. This path also marked the end of Soviet economic influence in Cuba. With United States' trade embargo in full force and most Western countries and other United States allies maintaining full compliance of the sanction, Cuba's import purchases dropped by 70 per cent in the four-year period from 1989 to 1993²⁴. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba realized a loss of U.S.\$4.5 billion per year in direct subsidies that Castro had come to rely on.²⁵ The Cuban economy soon showed its soft under belly. Castro initiated restraints and cutbacks in food, fuel, clothing and medicines that were now in short supply and in some cases unaffordable. Castro welcomed the Cuban people to the era he called the "Special Period".

More recently, there has been a movement in the international community to either drop self-imposed trade sanctions or disregard the 40-year-old United States embargo. The United States' North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) partners, Canada and Mexico, are also two of Cuba's largest trading partners and are among the most adamant opponents of the embargo. Nearly every country in Latin America and the Caribbean wants the embargo lifted. Germany, Italy, Spain and France number among the countries that openly trade with Cuba. Even Great Britain doesn't abide by the United States' sanctions; one can legally purchase a Cuban cigar at most reputable tobacconists in London or Liverpool.

The United States' trade embargo has certainly done damage to the Cuban economy; granted it took the dissolution of the Soviet Union to create the desired effects. This statement

is supported by the hard facts represented by Cuba's downward trend in foreign trade. One must ask the questions, did the embargo have the desired effects on the people and how wide ranging are the effects? Keeping in mind the intent of the embargo was to mobilize, through deprivation, the Cuban populace against Castro resulting in his overthrow. Mr. Castro is obviously still in power, so exactly how did the embargo affect the people of Cuba or did it at all?

Actually, the embargo did affect the Cuban people but, initially, not in the way anticipated. Because of the embargo, Cubans learned to make do with what they had. If one were to ask how they manage to get by, the people would respond with "inventamos" – we invent.²⁷ The "Special Period" Cuba has been in since 1989, coupled with its, until recently, isolation from the world, has the impetus for solution. These are solutions that have maintained the country for the past twelve years and may help to sustain it in the future. Take a tour of the streets of the capital, Havana, and one will find Cuba and her people getting through the lean "Special Period" by way of subsistence farming.

Dr. Fernando Funes-Aguilar of the Havana-based Grupo de Agricultura Organica stated in February 2001, "This is a far more holistic approach to agriculture. Is it good for Cuba? Sure and it's getting better. We have had many advances the past few years". Even the urban dwelling Cubans have learned the techniques to be successful agriculturalists. Nothing is wasted, plant material as well as manure, collected in canvas bags strapped to horses, is used to create compost for enriching the soil. The Cubans have developed organic pest controls and are even planting medicinal herbs. Most Cubans and even some non-Cubans see the growth of subsistence farming, even in the cities, as a positive result of the sanctions. This opinion, however, is really nothing more than *fidelista* (Pro-Castro) propaganda.

There have been many more negative effects on the Cuban population than positive effects. In 1994, Cuba's minimum weekly wage would allow for the purchase of a two-pound chicken or a pound of pork or four liters of milk in the unofficial market. Many families survived on one daily meal that consisted of rice, beans, soy and water. Cubans would be deprived for several months of items as basic as bath soap. Infectious diseases once thought to be eradicated such as tuberculosis and malaria were being seen again as the free health care system in Cuba has fallen apart. Many hospitals lack the most basic of supplies like bandages. Finally, the education system, once the best in Latin America, has all but collapsed due to lack of funding. There weren't even enough pencils or ruled paper to supply the school system.³⁰

For a country that was prosperous only forty years ago, living on the brink of abject poverty and deprivation seems to have had little effect. One could almost deduce that the elderly segment of the population has become sensitized to the situation and the younger

segment of the population, born after 1959, simply knows no other kind of existence. There is however change in the Cuban communities, both in the dissidents still in Cuba and the exiles in the United States. Just ten years ago the two groups were at odds as to the best way to handle the Cuban situation.³¹ At this point the focus will be on the dissidents.

A few years ago the dissidents in Cuba believed the main cause of Cuba's woes were found in the exile community in South Florida. They viewed the group as the "Miami Mafia" that wanted to take over Cuba and turn it into a right wing dictatorship.³² Now however, the dissidents are beginning to understand that in order for change to take place in Cuba, governmental reform must occur in Cuba and not in the United States.

Finally, the Castro regime has stifled the individual Cuban's ability to progress past a certain socio-economic status. The Cuban government's means of doing so is by restricting all initiatives that allow for individual entrepreneurship. People in Cuba are actually arrested for making too much money. The options for legally permitted, family owned businesses have been limited and taxes on the income of self-employed Cubans have been increased. In fact, Cuba's constitution specifically prohibits all private initiatives with the exception of self-employment in 140 categories of economic activities.³³ These types of restrictions surely physically and psychologically affect the Cuban people and are directly associated with the larger United States – Cuba relationship issues.

Effects on the United States' People and Economy

Some people would argue that the trade embargo with Cuba has had no effect on the economy or people of the United States. That statement is not all together true. It is true that the United States has not seen economic despair, in broad terms, on the scale that Cuba has due to the embargo. In narrower terms however, there are sectors of the agricultural industry that are realizing losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

One such sector is in the rice production belt of the southern United States. One Texas producer of long grain rice looks at Cuba as a market of 10 million people who are hungry for his long grain rice. According to the Director of the Texas Farm Bureau, Cuba buys up to 400 tons of rice per year from Vietnam, China and Thailand at an annual cost of \$135 million. That is money that does not make its way into the United States economy. Add to that the millions of dollars the United States pays in emergency relief aid and assistance to Cuba and one has wonder if it wouldn't be less expensive to summarily end the embargo.

The United States Congress has a bill in the House of Representatives which if passed would provide \$100 million to help support the Cuban dissidents.³⁵ Not only is the American

farmer, among many others, affected by the trade restrictions with Cuba, but also the tax paying population of the United States shares the burden by paying for aid to the dissidents in Cuba in addition to tax dollars used to fund activities like radio and television Marti and Voice of America. All of which are part of the program to depose Castro.

The large numbers of Cuban refugees who seek asylum in the United States probably most personally affect the American people, in terms of lost jobs. Since 1980 155,000 Cubans have fled to the United States. That number only reflects those involved in the two mass migrations, several thousands more come in regularly as individuals or smaller family groups.

As for the Cubans who have come to America, the intended effects of the embargo are too slow in coming. Many "hard-liners" don't want the program to change. These people are generally those who arrived in the 1960's and have become citizens of the United States. On the other side of the coin are those who arrived in the 1980's and 90's and only half of whom have become citizens.³⁶ They feel that change is needed but that the change must come from within Cuba and not as a result of external pressures. According to Alina Fernandez Revuelta, the daughter of Fidel Castro, "There is a growing consensus that the solution has to come from within with help from the outside". Castro's own daughter describes him as a "tyrant".³⁷

IS IT TIME FOR A CHANGE?

Many people feel it is time for a change to policy that has been in place for over forty years. An increasing number of Americans, not just the Cuban exiles, and most member nations of the United Nations, agree that a change in our political stance with Cuba is in need of revision. The dictator expected to fall from grace, and ultimately from power, within a few weeks or months of the imposition of the embargo and later the Libertad Act, remains at the head of his country. The people of Cuba, not its leaders, suffer. Many of the U.S. trading partners no longer support the embargo and trade freely with Cuba. The Castro regime is once again being funded with international dollars without having given up any influence over the people of Cuba. The intent of the embargo was to lead the Cuban people into a revolt. To date the revolt of Cubans is seen only in the defection of her people.

Of most concern to the American people in December of 2001, in regard to the relationship the United States maintains with Cuba, is Cuba's connection to world terrorism. Since 11 September 2001, the United States has been in a state of war against terrorist organizations with the capability to conduct international terrorist operations. The terrorist organization currently in the "sight picture" is Al Qaeda. There is no evidence that directly links Castro's regime with Al Qaeda or its leader Usama bin Laden or the activities of 11 September.

In fact Cuba has not been directly linked to active involvement with any international terrorist organizations or activities since 1995.³⁸ That fact, however, does not remove Cuba from the list of Countries that sponsor international terrorism. Cuba remains on the list along with Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, North Korea, and Sudan because it continues to provide safe haven to a number of terrorists and maintains ties with other state sponsors of terrorism and Latin American insurgents.³⁹

Americans have seen how easily terrorists can blend into the very society they intend to terrorize. Though the Castro regime has not been tied to international terrorist activities, the fact that he would provide a "safe house" for them is of concern. Couple that with the activities in other Latin American countries and the United States has reason for very real security concerns.

The area known as the Tri-border region, the common border areas of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, is another site of terrorist activity and possible training camps. In this region of South America at least three Islamic extremist groups; al Gamat, HAMAS and Hizballah, are known to operate.⁴⁰ Though no international terrorist activities are known to have originated from this region, it would not be difficult for these groups to use Cuba as an intermediate staging base from which to launch attacks into the United States.

From the standpoint of preventing terrorist acts against the United States, it would seem that now is the time to re-address our relationship with Cuba and several other countries in this hemisphere.

SOME OPTIONS

Changing the way the US deals with Fidel Castro and ultimately with Cuba is not something that will be accomplished overnight. There are many leaders on both sides of the issue who are strong supporters of the current arrangement. To the observer not in the "inner circles" of policy making such a stance seems to be based on either maintenance of the status quo or absolute refusal to remove the burr from under the saddle. Many would argue that simply dropping the embargo and repealing the Helms-Burton Act doesn't seem like the right path to take. Somewhere in between there is a right answer, but what is it? It's quite possible that the changes that need to occur as a precursor to normalizing the US relationship with Cuba reside in a comprehensive revision of how the United States deals with all of Latin America and the Caribbean Basin. The US certainly acknowledges that Cuba exists and that it lies a mere ninety miles off of the Florida coast. Yet, as with the remainder of Latin America, the US pays little attention to it. More concern and attention are paid to European and Asian countries than those

in this hemisphere, that at least is the perception. One could more easily say the US should revise it's policies dealing with the entire Western Hemisphere, however there probably needs to be no changes in relations with Canada unless the US were to include them as a cooperative partner in the changes of United States policy.

The Trade Embargo should be revised. Specifically in dealing with Cuba, it is important to keep in mind that the United States has always stood by the prospect of easing the trade embargo with Cuba if certain terms were met. Allowing free elections, open markets, releasing political prisoners, legalizing opposing political parties, and compensating the United States for illegally seized assets and properties are the primary terms that Cuba is required to meet. Castro has decided not to meet these demands. Thus, several US politicians contend the embargo must remain in place and have introduced legislation that tightens the provisions of the sanctions even more. However, what one must not lose sight of is that the embargo is not an end rather, a means to an end. It is an instrument of United States national power employed with the intent of restoring freedom to Cuba and her people. The end results after forty-one years of the embargo are a nation that remains under the control of a communist dictator and a populace that is deprived of many basic commodities. The US spends tens of millions of dollars each year on programs that support anti-Castro groups in Cuba and in supporting such operations as radio and TV Marti. Most other countries, including our staunchest allies like Great Britain and Canada, are conducting open trade with Cuba, further exacerbating the situation. In the case of Canada, which also lost business property to expropriation, most if not all of her corporations were either compensated or have worked out terms of compensation with Cuba. The Castro government has not wavered from its stand to keep the expropriated US properties, and businesses that owned those properties have not been compensated. Political prisoners have not been released, a multi-cameral political system has not been established and free elections have not been held. In other words, Cuba is no closer to meeting the terms of the embargo than it was in 1961.

Repeal the Helms-Burton Act or keep it fully enforced. The on-again, off-again employment of the act by the Clinton administration did nothing to promote the United States' agenda in Cuba and possibly hurt the cause. Even the Bush administration has waived portions of the act to provide humanitarian aid after natural disasters. Here is another US policy that has failed in its goal, to topple the Castro regime. The legislative branch of the US government should accept the fact that as long as Castro is in power, restricting US trade with Cuba will not force him to change his ideologies. Castro and the Cuban people have become accustomed to being without US commodities. Penalizing foreign companies with US subsidiaries that choose

to do business in Cuba only hurts the US and how the rest of the world views it. Finally, since the Helms-Burton act is not held consistently in force it should be repealed. It seems obvious that it's intent can't be met and it's practice is cumbersome regarding US participation in providing disaster assistance.

Discontinue supporting special interest groups, specifically the Cuban-American voting block. While this block of voters is important to the politicians in two states of the US, they are a small minority and one could question if their personal agenda for Cuba is in the best interest of the United States. Not playing to their desires could be political suicide if one party or the other were to take this stand. However, if in the interest of the greater good to the US economy, foreign policy and hemispheric stability, all US political parties took a stand against them, their votes or lack of votes would be negated. US political leaders need to decide which is more important, the Cuban-American community vote or regional stability.

Expansion of NAFTA or the acceleration of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) could be used as a means of revamping relationships throughout the Western Hemisphere. While neither of these trade agreements will include Cuba initially, the benefits to other Latin American countries might help to entice Castro to meet some of the demands set out in the Trade Embargo and Helms-Burton policies, the first being free elections in Cuba. These programs might even be the basis for having one or more Latin American countries act as third party negotiators with Cuba to meet these requirements. Castro will undoubtedly see them as puppets of the United States, however there is the possibility he would receive enough internal pressure to concede on at least some of his policies. Since security of international transport vehicles would be required, United States military to military programs could be stepped up to train police and defense forces in prevention of hijacking and piracy of transports and their cargo. Increased revenues from the added commerce would serve to bolster the economies of the countries involved, bring in jobs and reduce dependence on narcotics trafficking as a means of subsistence.

Including the Caribbean basin countries in NAFTA would seem to be one of the best means of defeating the Castro regime. With the exception of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, this is an area of the hemisphere that the United States has neglected. This neglect may be in part due to the number of European countries that have interests in many island nations of the region. If through the Caribbean Basin Initiative, all of these islands were to be included in the NAFTA or FTAA initiatives, it seems that the United States could leverage these Caribbean nations to exert peer influence and pressure on the Castro regime to acquiesce to the requirements of the trade embargo and the Helms-Burton Act. What the United States must

ensure in such an arrangement is that Cuba doesn't see itself becoming a U.S. protectorate like Puerto Rico, an end state no Latin American relishes.

To be sure, there are no easy answers for the United States – Cuban relations question. The options above are certainly not all inclusive, rather they are options that have not been developed or not fully developed by our national leaders. There seems to be no room for negotiation on the Cuban side of the issue and little room on the United States side. Yet at some point, if only for the security of the hemisphere, one of the two sides will have to give an inch. Maybe it will require nature to take its course. Practically speaking, Castro is an old man and he won't survive another forty years. The question then is who follows him. He has had the opportunity to influence the thinking of two generations of Cubans, which means there are those who believe in his ideals and the United States will have to contend with them.

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- ² U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Cuba Relations", 1 May 2001; available from http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/index.cfm?docid=2558> Internet. Accessed 19 October 2001.
- ³ Department of the Army, <u>Cuba a Country Study</u> DA Pam 550-152 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office 1985) 42.
- ⁴ Wayne S. Smith, "The Cuban Stalemate", Spring 1996; available from http://www.cigaraficionado.com Internet. Accessed 10 September 2001. Wayne S. Smith is visiting professor at The Johns Hopkins University and senior fellow at the Center for International Policy in Washington D.C. He was chief of the State Department's U.S. Interests Section from 1979to 1982. Before he left the Foreign Service in 1982 he was considered the department's leading expert on Cuba.
 - ⁵ Department of the Army, <u>Cuba a Country Study</u>. 40
- ⁶ Wayne S. Smith, "U.S.-Cuba Relations: Twenty-Five years of Hostility", in <u>Cuba-Twenty-Five Years of Revolution 1959 to 1984</u>, ed. Sandor Halebsky and John M. Kirk (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 337.
- ⁷ Peter Kornbluh, "JFK and Castro: The Secret Quest for Accommodation" September/October 1999; available from < http://www.cigaraficionado.com Internet. Accessed 15 September 2001. Peter Kornbluh is senior analyst at the National Security Archive located at George Washington University, Washing ton D.C. He is editor of Bay Of Pigs Declassified: The Secret CIA Report on the Invasion Of Cuba and he frequently writes on U.S.-Cuban relations. The documents referenced can be accessed at the archive's web site: www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv.
- ⁸ White House Aide to President Kennedy Gordon Chase, "Mr. Donovan's Trip to Cuba" memorandum for National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, Washington D.C. 1March 1963; available from < http://www.gw.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB18/01-01.htm>_Internet. Accessed 17 September 2001.
 - ⁹ Kornbluh, "JFK and Castro: The Secret Quest for Accommodation".
 - 10 Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ronald Reagan, <u>National Security Strategy of the United States</u> (Washington, D.C.: The White House, January 1987) 13.
- ¹² Ronald Reagan, <u>National Security Strategy of the United States</u> (Washington, D.C.: The White House, January 1988) 25.
- ¹³ George H. Bush, <u>National Security Strategy of the United States</u> (Washington, D.C.: The White House, January 1990) 9.

¹⁴ lbid, 12.

¹⁵ Michael H. Erisman, <u>Cuba's Foreign Relations in a Post Soviet World</u> (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000) 183-184.

¹⁶ John Sweeney, "Clinton's Latin American Policy: A Legacy of Missed Opportunities" 6 July 1998; available from < http://www.heritgage.org/library/keyissues/latinamerica/ >. Internet. Accessed 5 December 2001. John Sweeney is Policy Analyst for Latin America and Trade Issues in the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis International Studies Center at the Heritage Foundation.

¹⁷ George W. Bush, "Executive Order 13224- Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions With Persons Who Commit, Threaten to Commit or Support Terrorism", 24 September 2001. Available from < http://www.usinfo.state.gov >. Internet; accessed 30 November 2001.

¹⁸ United States Department of State, "Transcript: Bush Signals Support for Sending Aid to Dissidents in Cuba", 18 May 2001. Available from < http://www.usinfo.state.gov/regional/ar/us-cuba/bushaid.htm. Internet. Accessed 13 October 2001.

¹⁹ Kenneth N. Skoug, <u>Cuba as a Model and a Challenge</u> (New York: The Cuban American Foundation, 1984) 6.

²⁰ Ibid, 6.

²¹ Ibid. More current and accurate information resulted primarily in estimated figures due to the Cuban government concealing accurate numbers.

²² Sandor Halebsky and John M. Kirk, <u>Cuba – Twenty-five Years of Revolution 1959 to</u> 1984 (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985) 193-194.

²³ DA PAM 550-152, 206

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²⁶ lbid.

²⁷ Alison Auld, "Farming With Fidel".

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

- ³⁰ John P. Sweeney, "Why the Cuban Trade Embargo Should Be Maintained".
- ³¹ Andres Oppenheimer, "Cuban Dissidents, Exiles Grow Closer, Poll Shows" 6 December 2001. Available from < http://www.herald.com/newslibrary > Article ID 0112080331. Internet. Accessed 12 December 2001.
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 - ³³ John P. Sweeney, "Why the Cuban Trade Embargo Should Be Maintained".
- ³⁴ Dan Freedman, "Farmers Await Cuba Vote" 14 June 2000. Available from < http://www.seattle-pi.com. Internet. Accessed 15 September 2001.
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- ⁴⁰ Ambassador Francis X. Taylor "Presence of International Terrorist Groups in the Western Hemisphere" 10 October 2001. Available from http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/2001/index.cfm?docid=5674. Internet. Accessed 13 November 2001. Amb Taylor is the Coordinator for Counterterrorism

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